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AUTHOR Carney, Rachel; Horseherder, Bessie; Littlefox, Judith; Trujillo, Roger; Wimmer, Ylandra; Prater, Gregory

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ABSTRACT

Greyhills Academy High School in Tuba City (Arizona) is a federally funded tribal-grant boarding school operated by the Navajo Nation. The Exceptional Student Services (ESS) department and the regular education department work together to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms to the maximum extent possible. The degree to which students participate in a regular classroom is determined by their individual needs and based upon Individualized Education Program goals and objectives. To support the inclusion model, the ESS department operates a learning lab where students receive one-on-one instruction from a certified special education teacher using content from their regular education classes. In addition, a remedial intervention class is offered for students who are not ready for full inclusion in core classes and need direct one-on-one instruction. Instructional aides assist teachers with specific student needs in all classes. Vocational programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of lower-functioning ESS students by identifying those program objectives/competencies that would benefit each ESS student. The Intensive Residential Guidance program assists students who have trouble adjusting to the school and dorm programs or who have social issues. Individual Residential Plans are developed for identified students, and participation in planned activities is mandatory. Educational programs center on family and community involvement and support Native ancestral traditions of learning and teaching. Traditional ways of healing have been used to help students in need of services. (TD)

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Rachel Carney, Greyhills Academy High School
Bessie Horseherder, Greyhills Academy High School
Judith Littlefox, Greyhills Academy High School
Roger Trujillo, Greyhills Academy High School
Ylandra Wimmer, Greyhills Academy High School
Gregory Prater, Northern Arizona University

MOVING TOWARD A CLASSROOM INCLUSION MODEL

Greyhills Academy High School (GAHS) is committed to providing a nurturing and safe environment where culturally based and academically challenging programs are utilized in providing holistic, experiential, and problem-based learning that promotes life-long learners and whose knowledge will benefit Dine, the First Nation's people, and global societies.

With these words, GAHS states its mission, its reason for existence. GAHS is a special school, serving students with special gifts and sometimes overwhelming needs. The Native American community in the Western Navajo Nation and the Hopi Nation may be impoverished financially and may lack worldly experience, but it's also very gifted with insight, intellect, and compassion. We choose to build on these strengths and to address the weaknesses within the framework provided by the United States Department of Education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Arizona State Department of Education, and the Navajo Nation, but in our own unique manner, developed by our community to address the needs and desires of our community. We attempt to include all our students fully in the classroom and in extracurricular activities, no matter what their gifts or needs might be, to help them develop any special talent they may have, and help them address any deficit which might be holding them back academically or which might hinder them once they leave GAHS. With our residential program, we are able to reach many of the students on a 24-hour basis. We provide a caring family structure to many students who have never had that from their own families. No child can thrive without knowing that someone, somewhere, cares where he is, what he is doing, how he is doing, and what he feels. For some of our students, their experience at GAHS is the first time they have had such an experience.

Our Population

The Navajo Nation, as referred to by the Navajo people as "Dine' Bikeyah" (Land of the People), includes portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The 27,000 square miles of the Navajo Nation includes all or parts of 13 counties in those states. The Arizona portion measures in excess of 11 million acres. Much of the Navajo Nation is remote and isolated with arid deserts and alpine forests that characterize the land. The Navajo Nation has the distinction of being the largest Indian tribe in the United States. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 255,543 of the 298,197 people residing on the Navajo Nation are enrolled tribal members with the remaining being non-members who reside and work on the Navajo Nation.

Our service population also includes students from the Hopi Nation. The Navajo Nation surrounds the Hopi Nation with the western village of Moencopi bordering Tuba City. The Hopi Nation has a population of 11,156 enrolled tribal members with about 9,000 Hopi/Arizona Tewa residing on the Hopi Reservation.

GAHS is located in Tuba City on the Western portion of the Navajo Reservation in Northern Arizona and within Coconino County boundaries. Tuba City is approximately eighty miles northeast of Flagstaff.

Today, Tuba City's chapter is a local government entity of the Navajo Nation Government. As an administrative and educational center, Tuba City has developed rapidly and has been designated as a major "growth center" for the Navajo Reservation by the Navajo Nation government. (Navajo Nation Vital Records Office , 2000 U.S. Census Count)

Although the geographical area of Tuba City is limited to an area served by its existing or planned municipal infrastructure, the town serves as an economic and education center for a wider area encompassing approximately 4,400 square miles of Coconino and Navajo counties. The service area of Tuba City, as defined by the Indian Health Service (I) includes all or parts of Navajo Nation Chapters of Tuba City, Coalmine Mesa, Cameron, Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine,

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LeChee, Kaibeto, and Red Lake. Adjacent to Tuba City are the Hopi villages of upper and lower Moencopi, which is approximately one mile south of Tuba City. (U.S. Indian Health Service)

The 2000 population of Tuba City is estimated at well over 12,000 people and the adjacent Moencopi villages have an estimated population of 1,200 people. The outlying area has a population of well over 7,000 people. Tuba City chapters are not exclusive members of the Navajo Tribe, but include members of other Native American tribes including non-Indians as well. (2000 Arizona Department of Commerce)

GAHS is a federal tribal grant school, which serves 440 high school students. GAHS is considered a boarding school but also serves students who are bussed in from adjoining chapters. Dormitory populations increase in winter when the roads are at their worst. The homes of some families do not have running water or electricity. Less than 200 households have telephones and there are even fewer that have home computers. Poverty is prevalent; many student's families in our school system are supported by government assistance.

Inclusion at GAHS

GAHS is moving towards a model of inclusion that meets the needs of the students in this particular region. The Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Department at GAHS, along with the support of administration, is implementing a model of inclusion that includes students in the general education setting to the maximum extent possible.

The Exceptional Education Department serves 51 of the 440 students enrolled at GAHS. Services are provided to students identified in the following categories:

- Specific Learning Disabilities (35 students being served)
- Emotional Disabilities (7 students being served)
- Speech and Language Impaired (6 students being served)
- Mild Mental Retardation (2 students being served)
- Hearing Impaired (1 student being served)

The Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Department and regular education departments (e.g. English, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics) work together to implement an inclusion model of instruction, in the delivery of educational services to students being served by the ESS department. The degree to which a student participates in a regular classroom setting is determined by their individual needs and based upon IEP goals and objective. The components of our inclusion model include are described below:

Instruction

- Redesigning instruction in all disciplines on the basis of the abilities, needs, and interests of all students.
- Varying delivery models with small group, whole group, and individual activities.
- Cross-disciplinary instruction, especially with 10th and 11th grade social studies and English courses as well as with vocational and mathematics classes.
- Collaborative instruction or team-teaching between ESS and regular education teachers in core courses and (as needed) in business and technology courses.
- Problem and project-based learning.
- Teaching reading and writing across the curriculum.
- Teaching math reasoning skills across the curriculum.
- Sustained silent reading for all students.
- Integrating Dine' language, culture, history and government into all curricular areas.
- A remedial reading intervention program entitled "Read Right."

In order to provide support for our Inclusion Model, the ESS Department serves students through a "Learning Lab" where students receive one-on-one instruction from a certified special education teacher, using the content from their regular education classes and/or study skills material (i.e. Tutorial Model). In addition, ESS

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offers a "remedial intervention" class. This class is for students who are not ready for full inclusion in core classes and need direct one-on-one instruction. Instructional aides are present during these times to assist the teacher and to help with specific student needs. ESS also delivers services directly in the general education classroom. An instructional aide works with the science and English teachers to deliver services to the students in those classes when needed.

Professional Development

In order to meet the needs all of students (regular education, Limited English Proficiency, ESS, and under-performing) all instructional staff has participated in the following workshops:

- Reading across the Curriculum
- Writing across the Curriculum
- The Child Study Team
- I-Care (modified) student mentoring program
- Teaching the Learning Disabled Student
- Bi-weekly Teacher Study Groups, the focus of which has been and will continue to be the degree of implementation of instructional strategies that are presented in the staff development sessions, successful collaborative activities to share, and success stories.
- Anger and stress management in working with student aggression and disturbed behavior in the classroom and hallways
- Recognizing, understanding and helping students who have substance abuse issues
- Transition programs
- Additional training in developing reading, writing and math skills across the curriculum.
- In addition, teachers have had the opportunity to enroll in Exceptional Education Courses offered by Northern Arizona University

Vocational Education

Vocational Education at GAHS offers a wide variety of opportunities to ensure a student's success in high school. By taking advantage of these opportunities, all students can explore career options and develop useful, life-long skills. Some of our vocational programs have been recognized statewide for innovation and outstanding student achievement. In addition, career links with community colleges (Tech Prep) and industry have allowed GAHS to offer opportunities for students to start a career for life.

All Students have access to courses and programs that help them develop the critical skills necessary for the future workplace. These include planning and organization skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills, technology capabilities, and the ability to work alone as well as in teams.

In order to be in compliance with Arizona State Graduation Requirements, a student must complete one credit of fine arts or one credit of vocational education. There are numerous vocational classes available to all students to meet this graduation requirement. Students may choose from one of the following courses:

- ☐ Business Management Technology
- ☐ Industrial Technology
- ☐ Business Information Technology Services
- ☐ Business Management Administrative Services
- ☐ Early Childhood Education
- ☐ Automotive
- ☐ Building Maintenance
- ☐ Commercial Arts
- ☐ Hospitality
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Radio and Television
- ☐ Welding
- ☐ Graphic Arts

As part of meeting the occupational skills training for all students, including special needs students, the vocational and ESS departments have agreed to work closely in meeting the vocational education and training needs

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based on each student's IEP and Individual Vocational Education Plan (IVEP). By identifying only those program objectives/competencies that would greatly benefit the need of each ESS student; each vocational program can be tailored to meet the specific needs of lower functioning ESS students. In this manner, each student may attain optimal learning potential.

In addition, the two departments have collaborated to establish a grading system that would be advantageous to the optimal learning of ESS students. For example, if a student with a learning disability completes a program with minimal modification of coursework, then s/he could receive a grade based on the teacher's established grading system. On the other hand, if an ESS student is only able to successfully complete a lesser number of objectives/competencies during a school year, then the course work would be greatly modified and of course the grading system would reflect this adaptation, therefore a grading system of a credit or no-credit would be utilized.

Transportation and ESS students

GAHS supports transportation services for students enrolled in the school. We serve 100 percent of the students, including those in special education; inclusion applies to transportation as much as any other aspect of school life.

The GAHS transportation department's goal is to provide the most appropriate transportation services and arrangements for all students. Services for special needs students include:

- Regular transportation
- Special transportation
- Transportation services to parents who drive their children
- Transportation for curricular, co-curricular, and assessment activities
- Transportation between school and home
- Liaison services

Currently, none of our students requires special equipment on our buses. Enrollment of students with physical disabilities may require the installation of hydraulic lifts on one or more buses. However, no students with physical disabilities are attending GAHS at this time.

Intensive Residential Guidance (IRG) Program

Our school's social worker, residential director, dormitory advisors, and substance abuse counselor serve the Exceptional Child Residential (ECR). The ERC is included in the IRGP. IRGP assists students who have a variety of problems adjusting to the school and dorm programs, to other people, or who have social issues. Group counseling and other selected activities are designed to assist students with problems in becoming more productive members of the school community. The program develops target activity resources for those students who, without planned intervention, would have a difficult time in meeting the standards of the regular program.

The advisors, social worker, residential director, and ECR staff may review the student files to determine if the student meets the program criteria and make appropriate referrals to the IRG program. Students are selected for the IRG program upon identification of one or more specific criteria. Once a student is identified, the committee develops an Individual Residential Plan (IRP). The plan contains long-term goals, methods of providing services, evaluation procedures, and timelines for goal completion. Each identified student will have a plan, which specifies the identified problems that will be addressed.

Once students have been identified and placed, it is mandatory that they participate in planned meetings, individual, and group services. Behavioral issues are not an excuse to miss a pre-planned activity. Students who have unexcused absences for planned activities will meet with the residential director. Students are in the program for specific reasons and these reasons will be addressed during the meeting. Recommendations for follow-up will be made to the IRG staff.

The IRG curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the students who qualify for placement in the program. Specified services and recreational activity should support the IRG classes that will follow this curriculum. These needs are mainly social issues. Student progress reports are evaluated quarterly. The evaluation process includes a committee meeting each
Quarter to determine the effectiveness of the individual plans in meeting specified goals. ERC students are evaluated according to their IEP's.

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Inclusion of Traditional Dine' (Navajo) Values

In the preface to the document formulated to address systematic changes needed for Dine' education in the new millennium, the Navajo Nation and the Division of Dine' Education have acknowledged the need for developing educational programs that will enhance learning for Dine' children. It has been found that more successful educational programs are those that center on the involvement of family and community and, which support the Dine' tradition of learning and teaching. (Navajo Nation Education Standards with Navajo Specifics 2001)

The educational standards are developed to foster strong connections between post-secondary situations and the educational experiences of Dine' students. The standards are intended to instruct Dine' students about the history, language, oral and written literature, science, philosophy, and geography taught by the ancestors in order to inspire each student to exercise his or her role in society for the betterment of self, family, and community as exemplified and encompassed in the Dine' concept of "Sa'2h Naagh17 Bik'eh H0zh00n".

The ESS department has also used traditional ways of healing to help students who are in need of services. As part of the counseling portion of the IEP, several students at GAHS have consulted with a medicine man. Two of our students have actually been treated through traditional ceremonies. Incorporating traditional Dine values into the services provided to exceptional students has been particularly helpful in our Inclusion Model.

Conclusion

"In educating our students we ask "why" about some phenomena of the world which seem alien, different, and often frightening. One of the creative challenges to the Native American teaching of the sacred ways is to examine elements of the modern world that threaten a persons ability to seek life – to seek long life. After examining new philosophies and modern disciplines, methods of dealing with special educational issues in our unique rural environment can be incorporated into basic traditional foundations of teaching and learning. (Beck, Peggy)"

On entering this task, the teachers and staff at GAHS were confident that the needs of our ESS students were being met. We still think that way, but through this process we have seen that there are areas where changes need to be made and the system can be improved. Until every goal for every student is appropriate, and every goal for every student is met, our task is not complete. There is always room for improvement.

Contributions

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